

Bible Basics Conference 2024

Assembly Meetings (Part 1)

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Introduction

- Recap:
 - All believers on earth today are the assembly
 - All believers living in each city today are the assembly in that city
 - The Lord intended that all believers in each city would know each other, have fellowship with one another, break bread together, follow the same doctrine, etc.
- Sadly, last point is not possible today
- But obedient believers:
 - will follow scriptural principles for Christian meetings
 - as a result, will enjoy special privileges connected with 'assembly meetings'
- Note: 'local assembly' is a convenient shorthand, but must not override Scripture

Assembly Meetings

- Christians might come together in many ways (and should enjoy fellowship, Bible studies, singing, etc.)
- But special promise in Matthew 18:20:
 - ‘Where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I in the midst of them.’*
- Note:
 - ‘local assembly’ referred to in verse 17
 - verse 20 is not a definition of the local assembly
 - verse 20 describes the circumstances in which the Lord Jesus is in the midst of believers

Assembly meetings

- Key parts of Matthew 18:20:
 - *'two or three'* believers:
 - not an individual believer (although Hebrews 13:5 still applies)
 - but also not restricted to great crowds
 - *'gathered together'*:
 - in-person meeting (not online meeting)
 - text also implies coming together for a purpose

Assembly meetings

- Key parts of Matthew 18:20 (cont.):
 - *'unto my name'*:
 - as the Lord is in heaven, we cannot gather to Him there
 - but we can come together
 - on the basis of all He is; and
 - in way which gives Him all authority
 - this involves responsibility (2 Tim. 2:19), but also brings privilege and blessing (John 20:19-20)
 - *'there am I in the midst of them'*:
 - an absolute promise
 - the Lord is there to direct and bless, and to receive

Assembly meetings

- Matthew 18:20 concerns a prayer meeting (v. 19)
- Language similar to Matthew 18:20 occurs in relation to:
 - breaking of bread meeting (1 Cor. 11:18, 20)
 - edification ('open ministry') meeting (1 Cor. 14:23)
 - meeting concerning matters of fellowship (1 Cor. 5:4)
- Four meetings often referred to as 'assembly meetings'
- New Testament gives principles for assembly meetings
 - not detailed prescriptions like Old Testament law
- Note:
 - Acts 2:42 is not a list of assembly meetings
 - But it confirms the principles (apostles' doctrine and fellowship) and shows that they should be enjoyed regularly

Assembly meetings

- What does gathering to the Lord's name mean in practice?
- Can the Lord bless other meetings / meetings where Christians do not know these truths?
 - Yes, He may do so
 - But forsaking the truth when we know it is serious (Gal. 5:7)

Breaking of bread meeting

- Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:14-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; 10:16-17
- Introductory points:
 - Instituted by the Lord Jesus before His death
 - Intended that His disciples and all believers would continue to do it in His absence – and in assembly, not individually (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:26)*
 - Important to the Lord Jesus (Luke 22:15; 1 Cor. 11:23)
 - Only believers and the Lord were present (John 13:26-30)
 - The Lord Jesus directed everything (e.g. Luke 22:8-13) – and it remains the Lord's supper (1 Cor. 11:20)

* And also as an expression of fact that all believers are one body (1 Cor. 10:16-17)

Breaking of bread meeting

- Purpose 1: in remembrance of Him
 - Not the only time when we think about the Lord's death
 - But a special time to focus our hearts and minds upon His person and His work
- Main part: collectively partake of two symbols:
 - a loaf of bread: His body, which was given for us (Luke 22:19)
 - a cup of wine: His blood, which was shed for many for the remission of sins (Matt. 26:28; Mark 14:24)*
- Can/should be accompanied by praise and worship (Matt. 26:30)
- May also be accompanied by ministry (like John 14-16)
- To be carried out on the first day of every week (Acts 20:7)

* The same blood is the basis upon which God will enter into the new covenant with Israel (Mark 14:24; Heb. 13:20)

Breaking of bread meeting

- Purpose 2: proclaim His death, in the world, until He comes
- Purpose 3: to express the unity of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 10:17)

Breaking of bread meeting

- Who can/should participate in the Lord's supper?
 - Starting point: all believers
 - *'And [Naaman's] servants came near and spoke to him, and said, "My father, if the prophet had told you to do something great, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, 'Wash, and be clean'?"'*
(2 Ki. 5:13)
 - Sadly, moral evil or doctrinal evil, or association with such evil, may exclude (1 Cor. 5:6; Gal. 5:9)
- Who can/should participate audibly during the meeting?
 - All believing men in fellowship
- Who can/should give thanks for the emblems?
 - Any believing man in fellowship

Breaking of bread meeting

- Remembering the Lord's sufferings will bring sorrow – but meeting should also be characterised by joy (John 20:20; Ps. 22 heading)
- Worship:
 - is simply the fruit of the lips – i.e. expressing to God and the Lord Jesus Christ what we appreciate about them, what they have done, etc.
 - should be in spirit and truth (John 4:23)
 - is expressed audibly by men (in keeping with God's order for this earth), but on behalf of all present
 - should be in unity (like 'stringed instruments' referred to in OT)
- Both the Lord Jesus and the Father can/should be worshipped (Ps. 22:22; Heb. 2:12; John 17; peace offering)
- Note: not the only meeting for worship – spiritual sacrifices should be part of every meeting, and Christian life generally